

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3357
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USDOCOSOUTH
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 ATHENS 10453

BRUSSELS FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV,PINT, GR
SUBJ: NOVEMBER ELECTIONS: DRIVING TO THE FINISH

REF: ATHENS 10237

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING THE PAST WEEK MOST LEADERS OF
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THE CONTENDING PARTIES HAVE BEEN WINDING UP THEIR SPEECH-
MAKING FORAYS INTO THE NATION'S PROVINCIAL CENTERS
BEFORE CONCENTRATING ON THE FINAL RALLIES IN ATHENS
WHICH WILL END THE 1977 ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. PRIME
MINISTER CARAMANLIS WAS THE EXCEPTION, LIMITING HIS
PERSONAL APPEARANCE TO A BRIEF 12-MINUTE TELEVISION
ADDRESS. HOWEVER, HIS CHIEF LIEUTENANTS WERE ACTIVE

ON BEHALF OF THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE OPPOSITION PARTIES ON THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT WERE SIMILARLY HEAVILY ENGAGED IN WOOLING THE VOTE FROM NORTH TO SOUTH. WHILE NO NEW BASIC THEMES HAVE EMERGED FROM THE BARRAGE OF RHETORIC, THE ASPERITY IN THE EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE CONTESTING PARTIES INCREASED NOTICEABLY. ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO PREDICT THE ELECTION RESULTS WITH ANY PRECISION, CARAMANLIS IS STILL WIDELY FAVORED TO WIN A PLURALITY OF THE VOTE ENABLING HIM TO HAVE A MAJORITY IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT. PASOK'S PAPANDREOU SEEMS TO BE COMING ON STRONG, AND MAY REPLACE UDC AS THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION PARTY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PACE OF THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUED TO QUICKEN LAST WEEK AS MOST POLITICAL LEADERS MADE THEIR LAST SWINGS THROUGH THE PROVINCIAL TOWNS THROUGHOUT GREECE. WHILE ESSENTIALLY NO NEW THEMES WERE INTRODUCED, THE RHETORIC BECAME NOTICEABLY MORE VITUPERATIVE. DROPPING A PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED VISIT TO IOANNINA, PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS HIMSELF MADE ONLY A BRIEF TELEVISION APPEARANCE. HOWEVER, SEVERAL OF HIS PRINCIPAL NEW DEMOCRACY (ND) LIEUTENANTS (INCLUDING MINISTERS PANAYIS PAPALIGOURAS, GEORGE RALLIS AND EVANGELOS AVEROFF, FORMER PRESS SPOKESMAN PANAYIOTIS LAMBRIAS, AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENT, CONSTANTINE PAPACONSTANTINOU) DELIVERED SPEECHES IN IMPORTANT TOWNS

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THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY IN ADDITION TO CAMPAIGNING IN THEIR OWN DISTRICTS. THE ND SPOKESMEN STAUNCHLY DEFENDED THE RECORD OF THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT AND WARNED OF THE UNFAVORABLE CONSEQUENCES FOR GREECE IF THEIR PARTY WERE NOT RETURNED WITH A STRONG MAJORITY. IN HIS FIRST OF TWO ALLOTTED 12-MINUTE TV APPEARANCES, THE PRIME MINISTER RESPONDED TO HIS PRINCIPAL OPPONENTS ("WHO HATE EACH OTHER MORE THAN THEY HATE ME") AND LASHED OUT ESPECIALLY STRONGLY AT PASOK CHIEFTAIN ANDREAS PAPANDREOU. HE ASSERTED THAT PAPANDREOU'S STATEMENTS CONCERNING HOW PASOK INTENDED TO FINANCE ITS ECONOMIC PROGRAM WERE PARTICULARLY "DEMAGOGIC". THE UNION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER (UDC) WAS ALSO THE OBJECT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S DERISION AND HE ACCUSED IT OF HAVING A "SPLIT PERSONALITY" WITH ONE FOOT IN EUROPE AND THE OTHER IN THE AIR, CLEARLY REFERRING TO UDC'S SUPPORT FOR EC ENTRY WHILE OPPOSING A RETURN TO THE MILITARY WING OF NATO.

3. IN RESPONSE TO CHARGES ABOUT THE LACK OF DEMOCRACY UNDER HIS GOVERNMENT, CARAMANLIS REITERATED THAT GREECE HAS NEVER BEEN GOVERNED AS DEMOCRATICALLY AS IT HAS BEEN SINCE 1974, AND COMPARED THIS EXPERIENCE WITH THAT OF

OTHER COUNTRIES (SUCH AS SPAIN AND PORTUGAL WHICH, HE SAID, WERE STILL STRUGGLING TO ESTABLISH DEMOCRACY). HIS GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY, HE SAID, SERVED THE PERMANENT INTERESTS OF GREECE AS DETERMINED "BY HISTORY AND OUR COUNTRY'S GEOPOLITICAL POSITION". GREECE'S ORIENTATION, HE WENT ON, WAS TOWARD THE DEMOCRATIC WEST, AND ISSUES SUCH AS EC ENTRY, RELATIONS WITH THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE AND THE BASES, "WHICH ARE ALREADY UNDER NATIONAL CONTROL", ARE DEALT WITH IN THIS FRAMEWORK. HE ADDED THAT "NOBODY HAS THE POWER, AND NOBODY HAS TRIED, TO DICTATE A POLICY TO US ON THESE ISSUES...AS A SOVEREIGN NATION WE CAN RESIGN FROM ALL OF THEM WHENEVER WE WANT TO DO SO. IF WE DO NOT DO SO IT IS...BECAUSE WE DO NOT WANT TO...BECAUSE THAT WOULD BE TO THE DETRIMENT

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OF THE INTERESTS OF OUR COUNTRY." CARAMANLIS WILL NOT UTILIZE THE SECOND 12-MINUTE TV APPEARANCE ALLOTTED TO HIM BUT WILL MAKE HIS FINAL SPEECH AT NEW DEMOCRACY'S MASSIVE CONCLUDING RALLY ON NOVEMBER 18. THERE IS A GENERAL EXPECTATION THAT IN THE CLOSING DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN, AND PERHAPS ON THIS OCCASION, HE WILL MAKE SOME DRAMATIC ANNOUNCEMENT WHICH WILL SWING THE "UNDECIDED" VOTE TO NEW DEMOCRACY.

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4. THE ENTIRE OPPOSITION CONTINUED UNITED ON AT LEAST ONE POINT -- THE VIEW THAT CARAMANLIS' DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PROGRAMS HAVE FLOUNDERED MISERABLY. MANY OPPOSITION LEADERS POINTED TO CARAMANLIS' CALL FOR EARLY ELECTIONS AS ADMISSION THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED. ON THE RIGHT, NATIONAL CAMP LEADER STEPHANOS STEPHANOPOULOS AND HIS COLLEAGUES CONTINUED THEIR ANTI-COMMUNIST THEMES IN LAMBASTING THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT. WHILE THE NATIONAL CAMP IS DRAWING CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT FROM
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EXTREME CONSERVATIVES, ITS IMAGE SUFFERS FROM THE AGE OF ITS 78-YEAR-OLD LEADER AND HIS PRINCIPAL ASSOCIATES. STILL, AS A PARTY OF PROTEST, NC'S SPOILER POTENTIAL SHOULD NOT BE DISCOUNTED DESPITE THE ABSENCE OF DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP.

5. TO THE LEFT, AS THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN DRAWS CLOSER, IT SEEMS THAT PASOK'S ANDREAS PAPANDREOU CONTINUES TO GATHER STEAM. A LOUD, IMPRESSIVE TURNOUT AT A PASOK RALLY EARLIER IN THE WEEK AT CORINTH TURNED OUT TO BE THE PRELUDE TO A DYNAMIC PERFORMANCE BY PAPANDREOU IN THESSALONIKI ON SUNDAY BEFORE A HIGHLY VOCIFEROUS, ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD. THE CONSULATE GENERAL REPORTS THE RALLY WAS WELL ORGANIZED AND ESTIMATES IT EXCEEDED BY FAR CARAMANLIS' AUDIENCE AT THE SAME PLACE THREE WEEKS AGO, EVEN SURPASSING PAPANDREOU'S GIANT RALLY IN 1974. IN HIS THESSALONIKI APPEARANCE, THE IMPACT OF WHICH WAS ENHANCED CONSIDERABLY BY A NATIONWIDE TELEVISION AUDIENCE AT PRIME TIME, PAPANDREOU SHARPLY ATTACKED CARAMANLIS FOR LEADING THE GREEK PEOPLE ASTRAY ON SUCH ISSUES AS PASOK'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM AND THE REAL MEANING OF GREEK ENTRY INTO THE EC WHICH, HEA ADDED, ALSO MEANT AN "UNCONDITIONAL" RETURN TO THE MILITARY WING OF NATO. HE CONTINUED TO PRESS THE GOG ON ECONOMIC ISSUES, AND APPEALED TO THE RURAL VOTERE REPEATEDLY BY STRESSING

HOW CARAMANLIS HAS NEGLECTED THE FARMER. THE FIERY PASOK CHIEFTAIN WAS AT HIS POLEMICAL BEST IN ATTACKING THE U.S. AND EC COUNTRIES FOR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE JUNTA AND THE CYPRUS TRAGEDY, FOR SUPPORTING TURKEY AND ITS AGGRESSIVE DESIGNS IN THE AEGEAN, AND FOR FAILING TO SUPPORT THE RECENT UNGA RESOLUTION ON CYPRUS. AS IN THE PAST, HE WAS EXTREMELY CHAUVINISTIC ABOUT TURKEY AND, ACCORDING TO THE CONSULATE GENERAL, HIS
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CRITICISM OF GREEK PARTICIPATION IN THE RECENT NATO EXERCISE DISPLAY DETERMINATION SIDE BY SIDE WITH TURKISH SHIPS (WHICH HE ANAMED) WHICH HAD TAKEN PART IN THE CYPRUS INVASTION WAS WELL RECEIVED. PASOK OPPOSED EC ENTRY, PAPANDREOU WENT ON, AND NOT THE EC. IT FAVORED A SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT TO PROTECT GREEK INTERESTS. THE PASOK LEADER THEN AGAIN PREDICTED THE NEW DEMOCRACY WOULD BECOME A MINORITY PARTY AND CALLED ONCE MORE UPON THE OPPOSITION PARTIES TO PLEDGE NOT TO SUPPORT CARAMANLIS AFTER THE ELECTIONS. PAPANDREOU'S STRONG PERSONALITY APPEARS TO BE COMING ACROSS TO AN INCREASING NUMBER OF VOTERS, AND HE HAS YET ANOTHER SHOT AT NATIONAL EXPOSURE WHEN PASOK'S FINAL RALLY IN ATHENS ON NOVEMBER 16 WILL BE CARRIED ON TELEVISION ALL OVER GREECE. PASOK'S PRESENT MOMENTUM, IF PAPANDREOU CAN SUSTAIN IT, SUGGESTS STRONGLY THAT THE PARTY MAY POSSIBLY FINISH IN SECOND PLACE.

6. THE UNION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER (UDC) AND ITS LEADER GEORGE MAVROS HAVE KEPT HAMMERING AWAY AT THE RECORD OF THE GOVERNING NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY, CLAIMING THAT ONLY THE UDC CAN SERVE AS THE ALTERNATIVE. IN HIS RECENT SPEECHES MAVROS HAD CRITICIZED CARAMANLIS' DOMESTIC "SHOW CASE" SPENDING AS WELL AS THE GOG'S ALLEGED NEGLECT OF THE RURAL AREAS. HE PLEDGED THAT WHEN THE UDC IS IN OFFICE IT WOULD CONCENTRATE ON DEVELOPING GREECE IN A BALANCED ((URBAN VS. RURAL) MANNER AND ON CURBING INFLATION. HE HARPED ON FOREIGN POLICY, STATING THE TURKS HAD GAINED CONSIDERABLY AT GREEK EXPENSE. MAVROS ALSO PURSUED HIS ATTACK ON PAPANDREOU FOR PASOK'S ANTI-EC STANCE, EMPHASIZING THAT PASOK SOUGHT TO ISOLATE GREECE FROM THE REST OF THE "EUROPEAN FAMILY". THE UDC PUBLISHED A PRIMARILY ECONOMIC PROGRAMF RO "ITS FIRST HUNDRED DAYS IN POWER" TO DEMONSTRATE ITS READINESS TO TAKE OVER THE REINS OF POWER AND START DEALING WITH PRESSING ECONOMIC
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PROBLEMS IMMEDIATELY. HOWEVER, MAVROS' EXHORTATIONS HAVE NOT PRODUCED WIDE RESONANCE AMONG THE GREEK ELECTORATE, AND THE IMPRESSION IS GROWING THAT SUPPORT FOR THE UDC IS DROPPING. WHETHER IT WILL DROP BELOW PASOK'S RISING POPULARITY REMAINS ONE OF THE BIGGEST QUESTION MARKS OF THIS CAMPAIGN AND ON THE RESPONSE OF WHICH MAVROS' OWN POSITION AS PARTY LEADER COULD ALSO DEPEND.

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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7. IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS, MITSOTAKIS PRESIDED IN ATHENS OVER HIS NEW LIBERAL PARTY'S PRINCIPAL NATIONAL RALLY. HIS CRITICISM OF THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT DREW LITTLE RESPONSE FROM THE RELATIVELY SPARSE CROWD. THE RALLY ITSELF REFLECTED THE INABILITY OF MITSOTAKIS TO

GAIN A TRULY NATIONAL Foothold AND CONFIRMED EARLIER
ESTIMATES THAT HIS PARTY'S SUCCESSES WILL BE LARGELY
LIMITED TO HIS NATIVE CRETE. THE GREEK COMMUNIST PARTY
(KKE-EXTERIOR) ALSO HELD ITS PRINCIPAL RALLY IN ATHENS
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ON NOVEMBER 11, ATTENDED BY A HUGE CROWD (THE PARTY
ITSELF CLAIMED HALF A MILLION PARTICIPANTS).
FIRST SECRETARY FLORAKIS MADE THE USUAL ATTACKS AGAINST
THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT, THE U.S., NATO AND THE EC,
AND CITED THE UNGA VOTE AS EVIDENCE GREECE COULD NOT
DEPEND ON ITS SO-CALLED ALLIES. FLORAKIS SAID THE KKE
WAS PREPARED TO SUPPORT "AND ALSO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITIES"
IN A POST-ELECTION GOVERNMENT OF DEMOCRATIC FORCES,
DEPENDING ON ITS PROGRAM. AS ON OTHER RECENT OCCASIONS,
HE REITERATED THAT WHILE THE PARTY OPPOSED GREEK MEMBERSHIP
IN NATO AND THE EC, IT DID NOT FAVOR PARTICIPATION IN
THE WARSAW PACT AND CEMA. THE KE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES TO
BE ONE OF THE BEST ORGANIZED AND BEST FINANCED.
SPOKESMEN FOR THE ALLIANCE OF LEFTIST AND PROGRESSIVE
FORCES ACCUSED CARAMANLIS OF HAVING FORMED A GOVERNMENT
WITH "TOTALITARIAN" TENDENCIES AND WERE CRITICAL OF
MANY GOG POLICIES, ESPECIALLY DOMESTIC ONES. THEY ALSO
SPOKE OF THE NEED FOR COOPERATION AMONG THE OPPOSITION
PARTIES, "EVEN AT THE LAST MEMENT" BEFORE THE ELECTIONS,
AND CRITICIZED BOTH THE UDC AND PASOK FOR NOT COOPERATING,
THUS MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR THE RIGHT TO
REMAIN IN POWER. ALTHOUGH THE ALLIANCE IS NOT EXPECTED
TO INFLUENCE THE ELECTION SIGNIFICANTLY, ITS MORE PROMENENT
LEADERS -- SUCH AS ILIAS ILIOU (UNITED DEMOCRATIC LEFT),
GEORGE MANGAKIS (SOCIALIST INITIATIVE), AND LEONIDAS
LYRKOS AND BABIS DRAKOPOULOS (GREEK COMMUNIST PARTY -
INTERIOR) -- ARE LIKELY TO DRAW VOTES FROM BOTH THE UDC
AND PASOK WHICH COULD TIP THE BALANCE TO FAVOR ONE
OF THEM.

8. COMMENT: WITH BUT JUST A FEW DAYS TO GO BEFORE THE
NOVEMBER 20 ELECTIONS, SEVERAL KEY QUESTIONS REMAIN
UNANSWERED. CARAMANLIS AND THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY ARE
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STILL THE ODDS-ON FAVORITES TO WIN A PLURALITY OF THE
VOTE AND A MAJORITY IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT. HOWEVER,
THE MARGIN OF BOTH WILL DEPEND ON A NUMBER OF FACTORS.
ONE OF THESE IS THE VOTE THE RIGHT-WING NATIONAL
CAMP WILL GET AND THIS IS DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE

BECAUSE OF THE PARTY'S POOR LEADERSHIP AND WEAK ORGANIZATION. HOWEVER, WHATEVER VOTES THE NATIONAL CAMP RECEIVED WILL BE ALMOST ENTIRELY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY. ALTHOUGH MANY OBSERVERS ARE TALKING ABOUT 4-6 PERCENT FOR NC, A VOTE RANGING BETWEEN 5-10 PERCENT CANNOT BE EXCLUDED WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF AS MANY AS TEN OR MORE SEATS IN THE PARLIAMENT. SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE A BLOW TO CARAMANLIS' PRESTIGE AND, ASIDE FROM GIVING THE FAR RIGHT A VOICE THAT COULD NOT BE IGNORED IN THE POLITICAL ARENA, WOULD PRODUCE DIVISIVE PRESSURES WITHIN CARAMANLIS' PARTY.

9. ANDREAS PAPANDREOU AND PASOK ARE GOING ALL OUT TO REPLACE MAVROS AND THE UDC AS THE MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY, AND THE MOMENTUM APPEARS TO BE WITH PASOK. IN A COUNTRY WHERE PERSONALITY (HELPED BY TELEVISION COVERAGE) COUNTS SO HEAVILY, PAPANDREOU POSSESSES A MAGNETISM AND CHARISMA PERHAPS UNRIVALLED TODAY EXCEPT BY CARAMANLIS. IT NOW SEEMS PLAUSIBLE THAT PASOK WILL ACHIEVE 17 PERCENT, PERMITTING IT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SECOND DISTRIBUTION AND THUS EXPANDING ITS PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION CONSIDERABLY. SURPASSING THE UDC WOULD BE THE UTMOST VICTORY FOR PAPANDREOU WHO WOULD THEN BECOME THE OFFICIAL LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION. MAVROS HAS PROVEN HIMSELF A LACKLUSTER PERFORMER AND HIS PARTY MAY WILL SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES BY DECLINING FROM ITS 1974 TOTAL OF 20.4 PERCENT, PERHAPS EVEN FALLING BELOW THE CRITICAL 17 PERCENT FIGURE. WHETHER PASOK IN FACT MANAGES TO OVERTAKE THE UDC WILL BE DETERMINED IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS
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WHEN THE "UNDECIDED" VOTE MUST COME TO A DECISION.

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10. OF LESS DIRECT INTEREST, BUT NEVERTHELESS IMPORTANT, IS THE ABILITY OF THE KKE TO STAND ON ITS OWN FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE POST WORLD WAR II PERIOD. ACCORDING TO MANY OBSERVERS, A VOTE OF MORE THAN 6-8 PERCENT FOR THE KKE WOULD BE SEEN AS A SOLID GAIN FOR THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED COMMUNISTS, PARTICULARLY SHOULD IT COINCIDE WITH A FAILURE OF THE LOCAL EURO-COMMUNISTS TO ELECT ANYONE. THE ALLIANCE GENERALLY IS NOT ACCORDED MUCH OF A CHANCE OF ELECTING MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF ITS CONFIDENTIAL

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CANDIDATES. BUT AS A GROUP OF DISPARATE PARTIES APPEALING TO INTELLECTUALS AND THE PROLETARIAT ALIKE, AND WITH WELL-KNOWN, ACCOMPLISHED LEADERSHIP, IT COULD POSSIBLY TURN OUT TO BE THE "CINDERELLA" OF THE ELECTIONS BY GAINING GREATER REPRESENTATION THAN NOW GENERALLY EXPECTED.

11. CONSTANTINE MITSOTAKIS HAS ALL BUT GIVEN UP THE BATTLE FOR ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL PARTY, AND IN THE CLOSING PERIOD HAS CONCENTRATED HIS EFFORTS IN CRETE. SURPASSING MORE THAN ONE PERCENT OF THE VOTE WOULD BE CONSIDERED A SURPRISING OUTCOME FOR HIS NEW LIBERAL PARTY; AND MITSOTAKIS MUST SCRAMBLE TO ASSURE HIS ROCK-BOTTOM GOAL, GETTING HIMSELF ELECTED AND RE-LAUNCHED IN THE NATIONAL LEGISLATURE.

12. FINALLY, ALTHOUGH IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT OPINION POLLING IS AT BEST A RUDIMENTARY ART IN GREECE, IT IS OF INTEREST THAT A PERIODIC POLL CONDUCTED CONFIDENTIALLY FOR THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY SHOWS, AS RECENTLY AS NOVEMBER 10, THE ND WITH ABOUT 40 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, BUT STEADILY RISING. PASOK IS A STABLE SECOND AT ABOUT 18.5 PERCENT, TRAILED BY THE SLIGHTLY IMPROVING UDC AT ABOUT 14 PERCENT, THE NEW CAMP IS AT 4 PERCENT BUT RISING GRADUALLY; THE KKE-EXTERIOR IS AT 9 PERCENT AND FALLING SLIGHTLY. THE "UNDECIDED" IS SAID TO BE OVER 7 PERCENT, OF WHICH THE ND EXPECTS TO CAPTURE ABOUT TWO-THIRDS. THE RELIABILITY OF ALL POLLS IN GREECE IS OPEN TO QUESTION, OF COURSE, AND ONLY THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION ON SUNDAY WILL DEMONSTRATE THE ACCURACY OF THE ND SURVEY. CARAMANLIS HIMSELF, IN INTERVIEWS WITH THE FRENCH NEWSPAPER FIGARO AND FRENCH TV, PREDICTED HE WILL WIN A COMFORTABLE MAJORITY OF VOTES AND SEATS
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WHICH WILL BE "ABOUT" WHAT HE OBTAINED IN 1974.

13. THE CONSULATE GENERAL THESSALONIKI CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT.
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Subject: NOVEMBER ELECTIONS: DRIVING TO THE FINISH
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, GR
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